

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Lucino Dairy Co.

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(Star Farmer.)
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average. A herd
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y. He is milking 19 cows,
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ent in a new 3-stall ele-
d parlor. Dairying is com-
ed with the production of
to 100 Hampshire feeder
s a year. The pigs are sold
ough Alton's popular feeder
les.

Jersey cows in a grade C
program.
"We're doing so much bet-
ter in grade A and with better
cows that I can't see how any-
one can afford to operate like
we started out doing," Nor-
man commented.

Sold On Records.
He mentioned his records as
being one of the best tools in
the program. Milk is weighed
one day each month and the
figures are sent to the county
extension office to be com-
piled.

The culling of at least ten
cows has resulted directly
from the record-keeping pro-
gram. Records are the mai-
guide used in culling.

"We'd be weighing even
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A. M. program, but this p
makes things simpler," N
man said.

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and facilities
not to "plunge." An over
feeding system must wait until
there are more cows.
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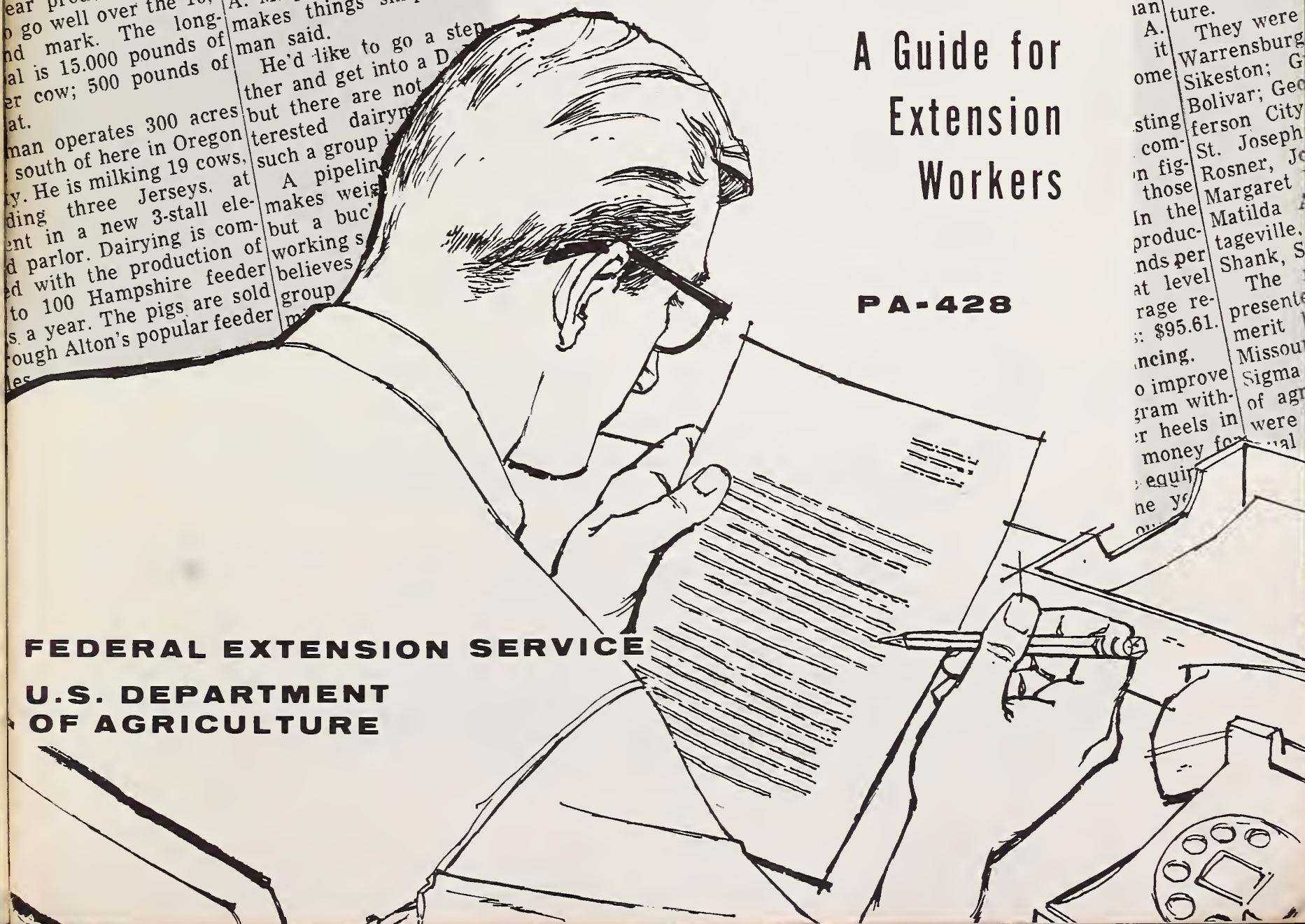
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MAKING NEWS STORIES WORK FOR YOU

A Guide for Extension Workers

PA-428

FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



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**Cooperative Extension Work: United States Department of Agriculture and
State Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Cooperating.**

Issued November 1960

MAKING NEWS STORIES WORK FOR YOU

A Guide for Extension Workers

by Bryan Phifer and James H. White

Division of Information Programs, Federal Extension Service

GOVERNOR PRESENTS CIVIC AWARD

Cites Farm Progress to Capacity Audience

Greenville, Jan. 20.—"It's the most thrilling progress I have seen in my public career—both in people and in results." So spoke Governor Harlan Smith today as he presented the 1959 State Civic Award to Green County for "Its Outstanding Community Development Program Achievements."

Governor Smith presented the award before a capacity audience of 450 persons in Greenville's new Community Hall.

"Green County farmers have shown there is a solution to the farm problem," he declared. "By

concentrating on what you can do best you've raised net farm income 60 percent in just 5 years. That's a record the whole State is proud of."

In accepting the award, Community Development Program Chairman Marvin Jones of Rt. 2, Greenville, paid special tribute to the county extension service staff.

"Without the foresight of our extension agents, and their leadership in helping us make a careful study of our problems and resources 5 years ago, we'd still be where we were then."

That's the kind of story we'd all like to see under a banner headline on page 1 of our newspaper. It's one every newspaper editor would like to print. It's news! It's about local people and their achievements! And, it reflects the greatest reward that can come to

any extension worker—to be of real help to people!

The purpose of this bulletin is to help you to be of better help to people. To help you make better use of one of your best tools—the **news story**.

WHY WRITE NEWS STORIES?

As educators, our goal is to help people make and put into use intelligent decisions. We use many means for doing this—all of which involve some sort of communication. We communicate ideas, values, information, aspirations. And one good way of doing this is

through news stories. Every day, more than 100 million Americans over 12 years old read newspapers.

Many studies have been made of the communication sources or channels farm people look to for information. Mass media consistently rank high as an infor-

mation source. And newspapers rank high for most types of information.

So . . . newspapers offer you these opportunities for communicating with people:

- A large and regular audience.

- High readership.
- Low-cost communication in terms of time, money, and effort.
- Retention value.
- And in the case of dailies—fast communication.

WHAT IS NEWS?

News is a report of anything **new** that **interests** people. The more people interested in it—and the more they're interested—the greater the news value.

Why should you as an extension worker, whose job is education, be concerned about the news value of the stories you write? Simply this: newspaper readers expect to read *news*. Their editor knows this. If he doesn't provide them news they'll soon turn elsewhere for it. So his first concern is to give his readers news. And your best guarantee of getting your story used is to make sure it's news!

Any new idea, event, situation, or development is news if it is of interest to the newspaper's readers. This rules out reporting of events that happened three editions back. That's not news—it's history! This also rules out straight subject matter unless there's something newsworthy about it.

Remember:

- If it's not new—it's not news.
- If people aren't interested—it's not news.
- The editor usually knows what is news.

WHAT'S NEW IN NEWS STORIES!

Like almost everything, newspapers and news stories have changed over the years. Best way to note this is to compare a newspaper that's 25 years old, or even 10 years old, with today's newspaper and news story.

Humanizing

One of the most striking changes in news stories in the past few years is the rapid shift toward "humanizing" the news. Both studies and observation bear this out. One study reports, "On the whole, newspapers have shifted toward greater emphasis upon emotionalized presentation."

A major objective of modern-day news writing is to entertain as well as to inform.

This means that most stories must have strong **human-interest** appeal if they are to be read. But it doesn't mean that all stories must be "jazzed up" to have reader interest. Certainly, news of events or developments that greatly affect the welfare of the reader will probably be read regardless of the way it's written.

On the other hand, good reporters dig to find the human-interest element in any story. It's not the labor strike that makes news—but how it affects people. And good reporters know that people like to read about people.

Witness the amount of news space devoted to the private side of people in the news. What they eat, drink, and wear; their golf scores; their family and social lives. Nearly as much space is devoted to their private lives as to their official views and actions.

Any news story can be "humanized." And in most cases, the human-interest story stands the best chance of being printed—and read.

Feature Sections

Another striking trend in newspaper content is the growth of feature sections aimed at varied interest groups. Thus, we find the modern, large-city daily often includes sections on sports, women's interests, real estate, home and garden, society, religion, syndicated columns, State news, entertainment, business and finance, and book and magazine reviews. And medium-size dailies and many weekly papers often have farm sections.

While specialized news used to be spotted throughout the paper, it is now concentrated within a particular section. Hence, the newspaper caters to the special interests of its varied readership without giving up valuable space for news of general interest. In fact, most metropolitan Sunday papers are now more departmentalized than many magazines. And they de-

vote much more space to feature information than to general news.

If you want to get your story used in large dailies, you'll find it pays to get acquainted with the feature editor who'll handle your copy. Find out what he wants, the interests of his readers, if he can use pictures, how much copy he wants, and when he wants it.

Home-and-garden sections have grown in popularity with readers in relation to their move to suburbia. What better method have you of reaching this audience than through this medium? If you don't know the home-and-garden editor of your paper, get to know him. Chances are he'll welcome your stories if they are news, are of interest to his readers, and written in the style he likes.

With the exception of feature sections—straight subject-matter stories are a think of the past in most newspapers. And even in feature sections most subject matter will end up in the column of the feature editor.

Why Versus How Stories

The big shift in agricultural news stories is to the "why" rather than the old "how-to-do-it" story.

As one editor recently put it, "I can't use now-is-the-time-to-spray-potatoes stories. Our readers aren't interested in this. What I want is news about what farmers are doing—and why they're doing it; not what they should be doing. This is news to both city and farm readers."

He also knows he can't afford to devote much space to information of interest only to the small number of potato growers.

What's new about spraying potatoes? Why is the new method better than the old? How was it developed? Will it save farmers money? How will it affect consumers: More food, cheaper food, better food? What's the human interest side of the story? This is what most editors—and most readers—want to know.

PLANNING YOUR NEWS PROGRAM

The only reason you have for writing news stories—or for using any other extension method—is to advance your extension program. When used properly, news stories become a "handy helper" rather than a mere deadline to meet. Good planning is essential if you're to get best results from your news program!

Granted, you'll always have unforeseen events and situations that are newsworthy. **But you'll make your news stories work best if you:**

1. Build them around your plan of work:

What work is planned for the year? With whom do you hope to work? What do you want them to learn? —to do? What do you plan to teach? When will you start? How long will you concentrate on each phase of your plan of work?

2. Determine what information is best adapted to news stories and what is best adapted to other

communication methods.

3. Make a calendar of news stories to be written:

Using your plan of work as a guide, set up a calendar of stories, including seasonal stories that are timely every year. Include in this calendar: purpose of story, audience, where to get the story, pictures needed, when to write story, and deadline for sending story to paper.

4. If possible, discuss your long-range news program with your editor.

Get his reactions and suggestions. If the editor knows what you have planned, you'll probably have a better chance of getting your stories used.

To sum up—let your extension program be the basis of your news program. Write about what people are doing—their plans, their decisions, and the reasons for this—not about what you would like people to do!

BEFORE YOU WRITE

For most good writers, the hardest part of the job is getting ready to write—not the actual writing. **Clear writing comes only from clear thinking.** Here are some suggestions we think will help you put **clarity, sparkle, and interest** into your news writing.

Define Your Purpose

Try to define in one sentence what you want your readers to know or to do after reading your news story. If your purpose isn't clear—don't start writing until it is.

Define Your Audience

Try to answer these questions before starting to write: Who am I trying to reach with this message? Will most—or only a few of the paper's readers—be interested? If only a few, you'd better use another method of reaching them.

How much do your readers already know about the subject? What stage of acceptance of the idea are they in—awareness, interest, mental evaluation, trial? What are they most interested in: the “why” or the “how” of the subject?

What's the general age and educational level of your intended audience?

These are the main things you'll need to know about your audience before beginning to write.

Get Facts Together

The best time to pull together needed facts is before you start to write. Interruptions break your train of thought and reduce your interest in the story. Having all needed facts on hand will help avoid this.

Make a Simple Outline

List ideas you want to give your reader. Then arrange them according to **importance** and **kind**. Put most important things first in your outline and in your story. Arrange like subject matter into like units so you won't be writing about apples and oranges at the same time. And stick to one subject, event, situation, or development. Remember . . . you're writing a news story—not a magazine article.

WRITING THE STORY

What's in it for me? That's what most of us unconsciously ask ourselves as we scan the headline or lead paragraph of a news story. And our decision on whether or not to continue reading is based largely upon the reward we expect from our reading effort.

In his discussion of “The Nature of News,”¹ Dr. Wilbur Schramm suggests that readers select news on the basis of reward. This reward is of two main types: immediate reward and delayed reward.

Schramm points out that the boundaries of these two rewards are not fixed. But that news of crime, accidents, disasters, sports, recreation, social events, and other types of human interest are read for immediate reward. And that news of public affairs, economics, social problems, health, science, education, and the like are read for delayed reward.

According to Schramm, a person who is above average in his reading in one of these categories is likely to be below average in his reading in the other. Reading for delayed reward tends to increase with education and experience. But more important, Schramm feels that the ease of self-identification with the story greatly influences reading selection.

This tells us three important things:

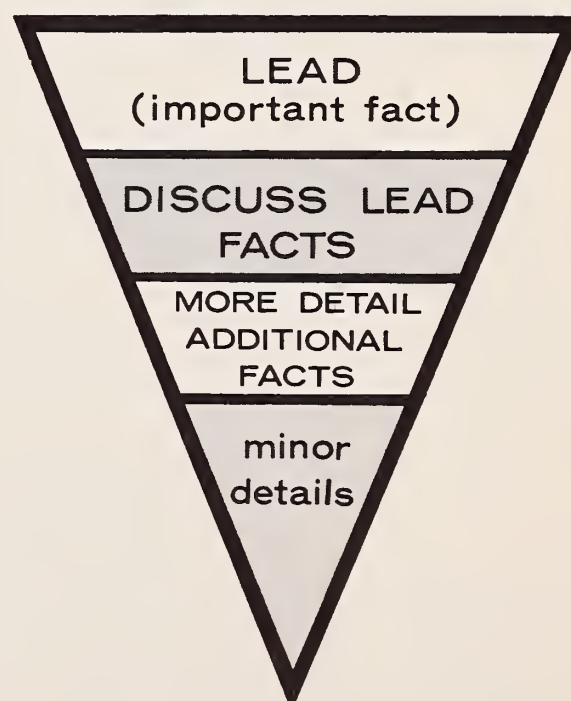
1. For most effective news writing we must know our audience.
2. Since a good share of our audience is likely to read primarily for immediate reward—we must make our writing entertaining as well as educational. It must have human interest.

3. It pays to know the reader's stake and build the story around it.

Story Construction

Busy editors and busy readers like to get their news in a hurry. Because of this, newswriting differs from most other writing. The climax or most important information usually comes **first** in the story. This is the **classic inverted pyramid construction**.

Inverted Pyramid Construction



¹ Mass Communications, Wilbur Schramm, University of Illinois, Press, Urbana, 1949

INVERTED PYRAMID CONSTRUCTION

Poor

A 20-acre field of US 13 hybrid corn was planted in rough-plowed ground this spring by H. E. Farness. It had no seedbed preparation other than the tractor wheels running over the ground ahead of the planter. A nearby 16-acre field was planted the regular way with two diskings prior to planting and two cultivations after the corn came up.

Tests taken September 18 show 8 bushels per acre difference in favor of wheel planting. Figuring corn at 90 cents per bushel, this means an extra \$7.20 per acre. Adding the \$3.75 saved in seedbed preparation and cultivation, the wheel track planting was worth \$10.95 per acre over the regular planting and cultivation.

Lead

Most important facts

Discuss lead facts

More detail

Better

How would you like to make an extra \$11 an acre from your corn? That's what H. E. Farness of Fairfax did this year through wheel track planting.

The \$11 per acre was the difference between 16 acres of corn planted and cultivated the regular way, and 20 acres wheel track planted and not cultivated.

Mr. Farness says the wheel track planting saved him \$3.75 per acre in planting and cultivation costs. On top of this, it yielded 8 bushels more corn, or \$7.20 per acre, figuring corn at 90 cents per bushel.

Farness says the 20-acre field of US 13 hybrid corn was planted in rough plowed ground. It had no seedbed preparation other than the tractor wheels running over the ground ahead of the planter . .

In the first story the most important part of the story—or lead—is in the last sentence. In the rewrite, the lead is in the first paragraph and additional detail comes later.

There's good reason, of course, for using the inverted pyramid form of construction:

- It catches readers' interest.
- It tells the reader what the story is about.
- It helps the editor get the gist of the story in a hurry.
- It allows the editor to cut out less important information if he's tight on space.

Although inverted pyramid style is the usual form of news story construction, there's no reason why you always have to follow it. Whether or not you do depends a lot upon the type of story you're writing.

Feature Construction

The other main form of newswriting is **feature construction**. In feature construction you build up to the climax of the story instead of starting with the most important facts first.

Feature construction is more often used with stories that feature the human-interest side of the news; and with time stories. The latter are stories that are not hot news but are interesting. Here's an example of feature construction.

Barbara Snell, 8, awoke in her back bedroom with the smell of smoke around her. She knew she could find her way to safety. But could her mother and brother?

Barbara awakened her 12-year-old brother, Paul. Then she hurried through dense smoke to her mother's bedroom, Paul at her side.

Mrs. Snell was aroused, groggy from the smoke. She started for a door she thought led outside. It was the bathroom.

"This way," cried Barbara, as she led her mother and brother to safety.

Barbara is blind.

Leads

Your lead sentence and paragraph are the most important parts of your story. It's here that you'll usually catch or lose your reader. His decision on whether or not to continue reading your story is based largely upon how he reacts to the lead.

Try to write a lead based on your reader's stake—one that will whet his appetite for more. Successful advertisers practice this with such leads as "Are nag-

ging backaches getting you down?” and “If you’d like to make more money”

Most news leads fall into two types: the *summary* lead or the *feature* lead.

Summary leads tell the WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, and HOW. This speeds up reading efficiency. The reader gets the most important facts first. If he wants more—he can read on.

Feature leads accent suspense, human interest, humor, or drama. They play on emotions and emphasize entertainment rather than information. But their basic purpose is to catch and hold reader interest.

SUMMARY LEAD

<i>Who</i>	{	James Robertson, Lee County dairyman, was named Farmer of the Year by the State Chamber of Commerce yesterday in Bay City.
<i>What</i>		
<i>When</i>		
<i>Where</i>		
<i>Why</i>	{	Robertson, of Rt. 3, Bolivar, received the Chamber’s \$1,000 award and an engraved plaque for his

FEATURE LEAD

It’s a long way from selling magazines on foot to being named “Farmer of the Year.”

But that’s how far James Robertson, local dairyman, has come the past 20 years.

The magazines helped Robertson pay for his first dairy heifer as a 4-H’er. This started him on a farming career that won him the State Chamber of Commerce’s highest award yesterday

The type of lead you should use depends upon the nature of the story and your writing ability. You’re always safe using a summary lead. But you can often put more human interest into your writing by using a feature lead.

Story Length

It’s impossible to set any hard-and-fast rule on how long a particular news story should be. News value, story treatment, and available space all influence the space an editor will devote to a story.

Most authorities agree that the ABC’s of news writing are still our best rule: **Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity.**

Story Authority

Most news stories you write will need a source of information or authority. This is necessary for building reader confidence. Without a stated authority or source, the reader is left to guess who provided the information. He may even assume that opinions expressed are the newspaper’s.

Naturally, mentioning the authority in every sentence would be monotonous and clumsy. One way of avoiding this is to first make direct reference to the authority and use implied references elsewhere in the story. However, you’ll need to use your own name or that of the authority you’re citing often enough to keep it in the mind of the reader. For example:

The Osage County 4-H Meat Judging Team will compete for top honors in the junior judging contest August 12 at the Oklahoma State Fair, County Agent T. J. Marsh announced today.

Team members are James Walker, Morrisville; Tommy Copeland and Ruth Larkin, Rt. 2, Ashland; and Stephen Wroe, Rt. 1, Hallsville.

The four were selected to represent Osage County on the basis of their top scores in the

Marsh says 47 counties will enter 4-H judging teams in the State Fair contest. The teams will judge 25 retail cuts and three classes of meat for quality

Don’t refer to yourself as the authority in a bylined article or a personal column. Here is a mistake we sometimes see:

Thicker Stands Can Mean Higher Yields

By Walter Johnson
County Agent

Thicker stands can mean higher corn yields in York County, according to County Agent Walter Johnson.

Johnson says

Right

Wrong

Writing Style

Next to news value, the most important elements of a news story are **clarity** or **readability** and **human interest**. The easier a story is to read and to under-

stand—and the greater its human interest—the more likely it is to be read.

Readability and human interest are largely determined by writing style. We can improve our writing style by using a few simple guides from research and experience.

Readability

Let's start with readability. What makes reading easy? First of all, reading ease is closely connected with the education of the reader. Research shows that most people read with ease something written on a level *two to three grades* below the number of years of schooling they have completed. Thus, we need to know the general educational level of our audience if we're to write at a level best suited to them.

This is pretty hard to determine for a newspaper audience since we'll probably have readers in all educational levels. But we do know two things that will guide us:

1. The average (median) number of years of school completed by Americans over 25 years old is around 11 grades.
2. People with more education find it all the easier to read something written at this level. And most of us like—even prefer—easy reading.

So we're pretty safe if we train ourselves to write in the 8th- to 9th-grade reading range. In fact, most popular magazines shoot for this range.

How do we determine the reading level of our writing? Simply score it on a reading-ease scale. One of the most popular of these is the one developed by Dr. Rudolf Flesch of Columbia University. Ask your extension editor for instructions on using the Flesch Reading Ease formula for measuring the readability of your writing.

You can get a rough estimate of the reading ease of your writing by using the chart on the back cover of this bulletin.

Make Them Short

Short words and short sentences are the key to reading ease. Short words tend to be familiar words—and word familiarity is a big factor in reading comprehension. Moreover, short words are usually easier to read than long words.

Remember . . . most BIG things have LITTLE names. LIFE, DEATH, PEACE, WAR, NIGHT, DAY, HOPE, LOVE, HOME, JOB are all one-syllable words—yet these are among the most important words in our language. Learn to use little words in a big way—it can be done.

USE SHORT WORDS

Poor

Are you concerned because aquatic vegetative growth has rendered your farm pond or fish pool useless?

County Agent George Howell reports that this problem can be alleviated. Annoying vegetative growth can be eradicated by the use of certain chemicals now available.

Howell advises

Better

Worried about weeds in your farm pond or fish pool?

You needn't be.

County Agent George Howell says you can kill those pesky weeds by using

Short sentences make reading easier.

This doesn't mean that all of your sentences should be short. This would make your writing most boring. But it does mean that average sentence length should be short.

Research and experience show that around **17 words per sentence** is a good average for adult readers. And people with less than 8 years of schooling prefer even shorter sentences.

USE SHORT SENTENCES

Poor

Robert Ramsey, a member of the Weeping Willow 4-H Club of Whitehall, led by John Lorin, won the distinction of being the 15th Franklin County 4-H Club member to win the special 4-H dairy award at the Franklin County Fair for having been chosen the member who has made the most advancement in his 4-H Club projects during his years in 4-H dairy work. For this special award, he received a registered Holstein heifer given by Elmer Eiley and son Rex of Preston, and a show halter awarded by Paul Howard of Preston.

Better

Robert Ramsey of Whitehall was awarded a registered Holstein heifer at the Franklin County Fair yesterday.

A member of the Weeping Willow Club, he was recognized for his outstanding record of 4-H Club project work. Young Ramsey is the 15th Franklin County 4-H'er to receive this honor. He also received a show halter awarded by Paul Howard of Preston.

The heifer was awarded by . . .

Human Interest

News stories can be easy to read but still be dull.

The best way to put human interest into your news stories is to write about people and to use **personal words** and **personal sentences**.

What do we mean by personal words? Dr. Flesch places them in these three categories:

1. First-, second-, and third-person pronouns—the familiar “I,” “You,” and “He” pronouns.
2. All words with masculine or feminine natural gender—such as Mary, Mrs. Jones, brother, actress, actor, son, etc. But not words like owner, writer, speaker, etc., which do not indicate the sex of the person referred to.
3. Words for groups of humans—such as folks and people.

A word of caution here, though. Newspapers customarily do not use personal pronouns “I” and “We” in news stories, except (1) when quoting someone directly, and (2) in bylined articles.

Personal sentences are—

1. Quotations—“This was my best year in Club work,” Mary Jones said yesterday.
2. Questions—How would you like to cut your food budget 25 percent?
3. Directions, requests, or commands—Please read the label carefully; beat the egg whites until fluffy; boil for 3 minutes.
4. Exclamations—Here’s good news for you! It’s unbelievable! What!
5. All sentences directly addressed to the reader—If you’re interested in making more money—here’s an easy way.
6. Incomplete sentences when the meaning comes from the context—Well, I’ll be! This is it! No! Maybe. Later.

Here is an example of how you can liven up a story by using personal words and personal sentences.

Dull

Gritty sand can work its way through the surface of and down to the base of the pile of a rug where it cuts the fiber, according to County Home Demonstration Agent Janice Workman.

Mrs. Workman recommends that housewives give their carpets a light daily brushup with a vacuum or carpet sweeper and then follow this with a thorough weekly cleaning to remove both surface soil and embedded grit.

She also advises periodic professional cleaning to remove the deeply embedded soil that even the best home cleaning can’t get out.

More Interesting

Beware of the little cowboys and Indians that stalk across **your** rugs. In their blue jeans lurks an enemy that can destroy **your** carpeting, warns County Home Demonstration Agent **Janice Workman**. “The enemy is gritty sand,” Mrs. Workman explains. “It works its way through the carpet’s surface and down to the base of the pile where it cuts the fibers.”

To combat this enemy, Mrs. Workman recommends a light daily brushup of **your** rugs with vacuum sweeper

Command

Personal word

Name

Quotation

Letting the person you’re writing about tell the story in his own words is another good way of adding human interest. Compare these two treatments of the same story.

Good

Emmett Solomon, Grade A dairyman of Singing Hill community, has found modern milking equipment cuts time, energy, and cost in dairying, according to County Agent Fred W. Morris.

Five years ago, when he built his new dairy barn, Solomon installed a glass milkline; however, he continued using 10-gallon cans to haul his milk.

Last month, he bought a 600-gallon bulk tank. Now, milk goes directly from the electric milkers through glass milklines to the tank.

Morris says that by doing away with the cans, Solomon has reduced the time he spends getting equipment ready for milking as well as the time it takes to clean up.

Still Better

"By installing modern milking equipment, I've cut the time, energy, and cost of dairying," says

Emmett Solomon, Grade A dairyman of Singing Hill community.

Solomon installed a glass milkline 5 years ago when he built his new dairy barn. However, he continued using 10-gallon cans to haul his milk.

Last month, he bought a 600-gallon bulk tank. Now, milk goes directly from the electric milkers through glass milklines to the tank.

"By doing away with those cans, I've reduced the time I spend getting equipment ready for milking as well as the time it takes me to clean up," Solomon says.

"Thus, I've reduced my labor costs.

"And I've got more time to go fishing once in a while," he adds.

KINDS OF EXTENSION STORIES

Any rigid classification of news would be based largely upon the judgment of the person making the classification. However, extension news stories tend to group themselves into one or more of the following categories:

1. **Before-and-After Event Stories.**
2. **Experience and Success Stories.**
3. **New Developments**—such as insect outbreaks, scientific discoveries, legislation, regulations, weather and crop conditions, progress made on problems, group decisions and plans.
4. **Predictions**—such as long-range crop and livestock reports, economic outlook information, long-range weather outlook.
5. **Subject Matter**—when tied to an event, situation, development, or problem of news value. But remember, straight subject-matter stories are deadly from the news standpoint. It's best to confine these to newsletters, circular letters, and personal letters directed to people who want, and can understand the information.

Many stories fall into more than one of these categories. Appointments, election of officers, and awards might fall into any of the first three. And the news value of much subject matter stems from an event, new development, or prediction.

Before-and-After Event Stories

Writing the Advance Story

The type of advance story you should write will depend upon whether or not the meeting is **open** to the public. Advance stories of open meetings should: (1) inform, (2) create interest, and (3) promote attendance.

The advance open-meeting story should tell—

1. The purpose and importance of the event; and that the public is invited.
2. Who is sponsoring the event.
3. Date, exact time, and place of event, plus instructions on how to get there if held in an unfamiliar place.
4. Names and addresses of speakers, what they're going to talk about, and why they were asked to speak.

OPEN-MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Poor

George Ward, University of Idaho extension plant pathologist, will visit Granger County next Tuesday, according to Bill Taylor, county extension agent.

Purpose of his visit will be to conduct an open meeting with all wheatgrowers on the dwarf smut problem that caused considerable damage to winter wheat in the county this year.

Taylor announced that the meeting will be held in the courthouse at 7:30 p.m. and urged all wheatgrowers to attend. Many pertinent facts relative to dwarf smut will be discussed at this meeting.

Better

Purpose	{	How to control dwarf smut in wheat—a serious problem in Granger County—will be discussed at a special meeting Tuesday, Aug. 2, reports County Agent Bill Taylor. The meeting will be held in the assembly room of the courthouse in Fairfax starting at 7:30 p.m.
Date		
Where		
Time		

Importance	{	University of Idaho Extension Plant Pathologist George Ward will explain what wheat growers can do to reduce losses from this costly disease. Dwarf smut cost Granger County farmers \$3 million last year. Losses statewide exceeded \$25 million.
-------------------	---	---

Qualification of speaker	{	Ward is well known among wheatgrowers for his work on smut control, and is familiar with control problems in Granger County. He is in charge of the smut-control experimental plots in Granger County and in other parts of the State.
---------------------------------	---	--

County Agent Taylor says the Aug. 2 meeting is particularly important from the standpoint of getting an early start on smut control this year. The meeting, which is open to the public, is sponsored by the Granger County Extension Service.

The first example above highlights the speaker in the lead, yet fails to say what he is going to talk about. It relegates the purpose to the second paragraph and omits the real importance of the meeting.

The rewrite states the purpose and importance of the meeting in the lead. It gives additional detail on the importance later, and provides all necessary information.

Poor

A clothing workshop has been scheduled for May 14, and will be held in the basement of the Wheaton Methodist Church.

Arrangements for the meeting are being made by Miss Doris Shaffer, county home agent. She states that muslin shells will be provided by several home demonstration club members and will be used in the demonstrations.

Instruction in alterations will be given by Miss Shaffer and Miss Julie Goodrich, extension clothing specialist

Dull and impersonal

Better

Take heart, ladies! You can be in style and still stay within your clothing budget. The trick is in altering clothes to bring them up to date, says County Home Agent Doris Shaffer.

You can learn this at a workshop to be held May 14 in the basement of the Wheaton Methodist Church. The workshop starts at 9:30 a.m.

Instructors will be Miss Shaffer, and Miss Julie Goodrich, University of Missouri Extension Service clothing specialists. Both have had advanced training in the Bishop method of clothing construction to be taught at the workshop

Addressed to reader

The first version is a typical meeting announcement—the second one is addressed to the reader. Which do you think would catch your attention best?

Nonpublic Meetings

The advance story of a nonpublic meeting should tell why the meeting is being held, who's holding it, and what they will do. Promoting attendance should not be the purpose of the news story. This should be

done through letters and other means of direct communication with the people you're inviting.

Poor

Poor lead
Bad
construction
Too many
facts in one
paragraph
Doesn't
belong

The Hillview 4-H Club will hold its annual Awards Day Dinner at the Hillview School, October 1, with the meat to be furnished by Mrs. Earl Hughes and each family to bring a covered dish and their own service. It is hoped each 4-H member and his family will attend.

The punch will be furnished by Mrs. Raymond Brown. Each leader is asked to bring a dessert.

At this dinner Rose Williams of Ashton will give a talk and show slides of her trip to England and Wales as an IFYE delegate.

Special awards will also be given to club members.

Better

Lead

An illustrated talk of her recent trip abroad by Miss Rose Williams of Ashton and presentation of awards to Club members will highlight the annual Hillview 4-H Club Dinner October 1.

Miss Williams recently returned from 6 months in England and Wales as an International Farm Youth Exchange delegate from Clark County. While there, she lived with three different farm families. She also spent 1 month visiting rural youth organizations in these countries.

Why
awards
are
being
presented

Hillview 4-H Club Leader Erick Peterson reports that 22 club members will be awarded pins and certificates for completing their 4-H projects. Special recognition will be paid to Billy Joe Thompson of Muncie for being a State winner in the 4-H tractor maintenance project. He will receive a gold-filled pin awarded by the Ogdon Oil Co.

The Awards Day Dinner will be held in the Hillview School starting at 7:30.

Note that reference to who will furnish food and drinks is omitted in the rewrite. Reasons: It is relatively unimportant in relation to the important parts of the story—the speaker and the awards.

Followup Stories

Your job is only half done after writing the advance-meeting stories. The other half is writing followup stories. And the latter is just as important as the former.

A typical comment of newspaper editors is "The agent floods me with advance stories, but forgets me after the meeting is held."

When this happens, it means we've lost track of the real news value in the event we're writing about—what happened at the meeting!

Remember . . . only a fraction of the people you want to reach will attend most meetings you hold. To reach the rest you'll have to depend largely on followup stories and radio programs.

Common mistakes in the followup story:

1. Telling the subject discussed but not what was said.
2. Reporting an election of officers but not who was elected.
3. Reporting that a meeting was held but not what was accomplished.

Note these examples adapted from actual stories and rewrites of these stories:

Poor

A meeting of cotton growers was held last night at the courthouse, according to County Agent Hubert M. Holland.

Approximately 150 farmers attended the meeting at which time a panel discussed different ways of controlling cotton boll weevils.

Panel members were

Better

Cotton boll weevils can be controlled.

That was the opinion of panel speakers at last night's meeting of cotton growers.

Around 150 farmers, jammed into the jury room at the county courthouse, heard J. G. Roberts of the Broadbelt community declare: "We can lick this boll weevil problem"

The original story reports that a panel discussed ways of controlling cotton boll weevils but fails to report what was said. The rewrite reports what was said.

Poor

The Danville Dandy Team of Danville met at Susan and Barbara Ware's house last Tuesday. Nineteen members and two guests answered roll call. The meeting was opened by the flag salute and 4-H pledge.

There was no old business. For new business we elected officers. The meeting was adjourned.

Better

Jimmy Buie, Rt. 1, Danville, was elected president of the Danville Dandy 4-H Club last Tuesday.

Joyce Johnston, Rt. 2, Danville, is new vice president, and Johnny Russell of Rockville is chairman.

Election of new officers came . .

The original story above starts off with trivial information while relegating the newsworthy election of officers to the fifth sentence. Then the writer compounds the error by not saying who the new officers are. Also, note incorrect use of personal pronoun "we" in a story that is not bylined.

Poor

The Free Will HD Club met at the home of Mrs. Robinson with Mrs. Burns assisting hostess. Fifteen members and two visitors were present.

The meeting opened with the singing of our National HD song. Mrs. Jackson gave the devotion. Mrs. Mitchell led the group giving the Flag Pledge and Council Creed.

The president introduced Mrs. Judkins who gave a report on the book, "How To Dress Well on \$1 a Day."

Upon arrival at the meeting the hostess served a delicious salad plate with hot punch.

Better

Avoid impulse buying if you want to dress well at reasonable cost!

That was one of the tips members attending the Free Will Home Demonstration Club received last Tuesday. The meeting was held

Mrs. William Judkins of Preston reviewed the book, "How To Dress Well on \$1 a Day," by Doris May, fashion designer and editor.

She quoted Mrs. May as advising, "Have a long-range plan—3 years—for basic items of clothing such as coats and suits. This will help you avoid impulse buying."

The original story reports on a meeting but doesn't tell what the speaker said. Other mistakes include incorrect use of "our," failure to include full names of people mentioned in the story; omission of president's name; use of abbreviation HD. Finally, the vagueness of the last sentence leaves the reader to wonder if guests were served upon their arrival or upon the hostess's arrival.

Experience and Success Stories

As we've emphasized before, people are interested in reading about people. Thus, the popularity of experience and success stories.

The heart of extension work is the people we work with and the subject matter we teach. Experience and success stories provide an excellent way to combine the two into real news stories. Instead of just writing about subject matter or programs—we write about people and what they are doing. This gives the story news value—human interest—reader appeal!

Major difference between experience and success stories is the results cited. Most success stories are based on results attained by a person or group. *But you don't have to wait for final results to write an experience story.* Its major purpose is to let the person who has had the experience relate it; not to cite final results.

Experience Stories

Here's an example of how you can use an experience story to get subject matter across to the reader.

"It sure made my wheat green up and perk up in a hurry."

That's how Walter Lee of the Ridgeway community describes the response of a 40-acre wheat field to top dressing with nitrogen fertilizer.

"I used 125 pounds of ammonium nitrate per acre," says Lee. "But I ran out of fertilizer before I got to another 10-acre field I have. I've been aiming to get that field fertilized but it's been too wet. You can sure tell the difference in the two fields in just 3 weeks' time."

Lee topdressed his wheat the first week of January. The 125 pounds of ammonium nitrate he used furnished about 40 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre. That's the amount recommended by the Extension Service for winter topdressing.

"I couldn't figure out why my wheat wasn't doing any better until I talked to County Agent Joe Williams," Lee says. "I had soil tests made last fall and applied the amount of fertilizer that the test showed was needed.

"But when I talked to Williams about my wheat I found that . . ."

Note that the story cites Mr. Lee's results to date—not final results. It's a timely story and tells an interesting experience. Which do you think would be most effective in selling the value of topdressing—this story or a straight subject-matter story?

Success Stories

Success or result stories are a time-proven way of making news stories work for you. They have all the ingredients for reader appeal—news and human interest.

The very label we've given success stories denotes people. Thus, to be a true success story—the story should tell of *success or results attained by people*.

Good success stories—whether about individuals or groups—**should report:**

1. The problem.
2. What was done to solve the problem. (What the people did, and if possible, what extension workers did.)
3. The results.

There's no set rule about the order or ranking of these three elements. Which ones comes first depends upon the approach you feel will best accomplish your purpose.

Here's an example of an **individual success story**:

Don't argue with Donald B. Miller, Smith County cattleman, when he says, "Scales beat the eye."

Miller, whose ranch is near Pine Ridge, is referring to the way he selects his replacement heifer calves in his cattle operation.

Until a few years ago, he selected his replacement heifers strictly on how they looked. And he admits, "I sure made my share of mistakes."

Problem

Concerned because some of the heifers that looked best to him at the time didn't do so well in the long run, he paid a visit to County Agent John R. Morris's office.

Morris introduced him to the cowherd performance testing program. Under this system, the cattleman bases his selection on percentage of calf crop weaned, market quality as indicated by grade, and weaning weight or weight for age.

What was done

The idea appealed to Miller because it seemed to take some of the guesswork out of selecting replacement heifers. He became the first Smith County cattleman to try the program.

"Three years of performance testing has convinced me it's the only sound way of selecting heifers," says Miller. "My records show it has helped me lower production costs and increase average weaning weights. In addition"

Results

Group Success Story

Here's a group success story that has countywide interest. In this case the lead is a natural—the **results** of work done! Note that the order of presentation of the three elements of a success story differ here from the previous story.

*The
result*

All grade A milk produced in the county now comes from brucellosis-free herds—and eradication of the disease in the county is a distinct possibility, County Agent H. H. Meyers announced today.

*The
problem*

Three years ago brucellosis, commonly called Bang's disease, was costing Pike County dairy-men \$1½ million annually. More important, it was a constant threat to human health since raw milk from infected cows is a source of undulant fever.

*What
was
done*

The move to stamp out brucellosis in Pike County started in June 1957 after a survey revealed 34 percent of the county's grade A herds were infected with the disease. Meyers called a meeting of local farm leaders to explain the situation and to discuss what could be done about it.

The first step taken by this group was appointment of a Pike County brucellosis committee. Twelve local dairy farmers—two from each township, have served on the committee since it was formed. They are Paul Ausley, Rt. 1, Smithton

available from the State's seed dealers"

Grasshoppers, making the most of a dry season, are on the increase in Cherokee County.

This warning was sounded today by County Agent John W. Williams.

"These hoppers can eliminate entire stands of hay, small grain, and legumes—even under the best of circumstances. Damage can be even worse under drought conditions such as we're experiencing right now"

Williams advises

It's hard enough keeping up with the Joneses—next to impossible to keep up with the constant stream of new synthetic fibers coming on the market.

Latest of these to enter the clothing field is Hextron, reports County Home Agent Ruth Deering. Unlike most synthetics, it

"We've had hundreds of questions about labeling of synthetic materials, how to wash or clean them, and what temperature to use if they require ironing," says Miss Deering.

To help answer these and other questions on synthetic fibers, the University of Nebraska extension service has prepared a new leaflet on "Selection and Care of Synthetic Fibers." You may obtain a copy by calling or writing to Miss Deering at the county extension office, 110 North 8th Street, Wakefield.

New Developments

Newspapers editors are always on the lookout for stories on new developments, scientific discoveries, weather and crop conditions, and the like. And fortunately, we in extension have an abundance of this information. Many new developments can be localized or put into the context of your county situation.

Here are some examples:

Seed of the new corn variety Dixie 77 will be available to Cherokee County farmers in quantity for the first time this year, reports County Agent John W. Williams.

Dixie 77 is a white corn hybrid released a year ago by the University of Tennessee and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Williams says, "10,000 bushels of certified seed from the new variety will be

Predictions

Among the most important news stories you can write are those dealing with long-range crop and livestock estimates, weather forecasts, and price and outlook information.

Because such stories deal with predictions rather than fact, many agents fail to recognize their news

value. Yet these stories rank high on editor preference for agricultural news.

Common mistakes in writing prediction stories include:

1. Reporting the prediction but not the probable effect on people.
2. Failure to localize the story.
3. Failure to give the story any human interest value; i.e., reporting only cold statistics or forecasts. This is especially true of economic outlook information.

Note how the rewrite of this story localizes the information and reports the expected effect on people.

Poor

The latest crop report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates there will be lots of fresh vegetables this spring. The overall estimate is for commercial harvest to run about 5 percent above normal.

Smaller crops of lettuce, melons, and tomatoes are expected. But this will be offset by larger than normal crops of broccoli, cabbage, peas, beets, asparagus, cucumbers, and carrots. There will also be an increase in celery, onions and snap beans, and peppers. A normal crop is forecast for cauliflower, sweetcorn, spinach, and eggplants.

Better

National picture

- Supply
- Price

Mrs. Housewife will have plenty of fresh vegetables to choose from this spring. And she will be able to buy most vegetables a little cheaper than last year.

That's the latest report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's crop reporting service. The Department reports that smaller crops of lettuce

Local situation

- Supply
- Price

Locally, the cold, wet spring has set back production of

N. W. Morris, Manager of the Kern Valley Vegetable Growers Association, reports that prices of locally grown sweetcorn, tomatoes, peas, and melons are expected to run about 3 to 5 cents

per pound above last year. Morris expects prices of

Outlook stories don't have to be cold and impersonal. Here, for example, is how you might personalize and localize an outlook story:

"We're cutting back on corn and oats production and concentrating on doing a better job with our dairy herd."

That's how the Louis Morrisons of Rt. 3, Wheaton, plan to offset expected lower grain prices next year.

"We've found we can always depend upon our cows and the more attention we give to taking care of them—the better they take care of us. We figure we can cut our feed bill 10 percent by doing a better job on pasture and forage production. And with lower grain prices, we can afford to buy more of our concentrates," say the Morrisons.

The outlook for grain prices next year is

Subject-Matter Stories

Like any other news story, a subject-matter story must pass this test: *Is it news, is it of interest to the paper's readers?* If the story is timely and of interest to a large number of readers . . . it is news. But remember—subject matter of interest to only a few readers doesn't make a news story. As mentioned earlier, use circular letters or other forms of direct mail for communicating in these situations.

This story was probably read—and the subject matter used—by thousands of city readers:

Green Bermuda Lawns During Winter

"Bermuda or devil grass lawns can be kept green during the winter months by fertilizing and planting now with annual bluegrass or rye," says University of California Farm Adviser H. W. Longfellow of Los Angeles County.

"First, apply fertilizer when the grass leaves are dry and just before the lawn is to be watered. Apply 5 pounds of ammonium sulfate or any fertilizer containing an equivalent amount of nitrogen to 1,000 square feet of lawn.

"Sprinkle the fertilizer evenly over the soil surface, then give the entire lawn area a good irrigation. Wait a few days after the irrigation and then plant the annual bluegrass or rye seed. Scatter about 1 pound of seed over 300 square feet of lawn.

"Be sure to keep the seed moist until the newly planted grass starts growth. When Bermuda grass starts to turn brown, the new grass will appear and keep your lawn green all winter."

Note the use of active verbs, directions, and the implied "you" in the story—[You] apply 5 pounds of . . . Sprinkle the . . . Be sure to . . . This is a good example of writing **directly** to the reader—one of the tricks of improving human interest in news stories.

As in the Bermuda grass story, time or seasonal interest is always a good news peg to hang a subject matter story on. Such leads as these make a good introduction for seasonal subject-matter stories:

Now that school has started, good home lighting is more important than ever—especially for study areas. If your child's desk lamp is too

Easter always brings a rash of requests for information on cooking ham, reports County Home Agent Ruth Wilkins

NEWSPAPER STYLE GUIDE

So-called "newspaper style" varies from newspaper to newspaper. However, almost all newspapers and wire services follow certain principles of style. Here are a few you should use.

Figures

Try not to begin a sentence with a number. However, if you must begin a story with a number such as "40 farmers," spell it out as "Forty farmers."

Spell out numbers below **ten** except for: money (\$4); percentages (3 percent); time of day (3 p.m.); temperature (8 degrees); dates (May 9); statistical matter and series of related things (He has 80 milking cows, 20 replacements, and 2 bulls); numbers containing whole number and fraction ($3\frac{1}{2}$, $6\frac{3}{4}$); units (5 acres); street numbers, serial numbers, phone numbers.

Abbreviations

Full names of organizations should be used the first

time in the story. For example, write Dairy Herd Improvement Association the first time, then DHIA.

Names and Addresses

Use a person's full name, not his nickname. Say Charles H. (Chuck) Wright, not merely Chuck Wright. A possible exception might be a feature lead such as, "It was a long haul for Chuck Wright, but he finally made it."

Be specific in writing someone's address. Write Charles H. Wright, Rt. 1, Wadesboro, not just Charles H. Wright of Henry County. There may be more than one Charles H. Wright in the county. Often it's best to be even more specific and say Charles H. Wright of Rt. 1, Wadesboro, who farms in Knob Hill community.

Spelling

One further reference to names—spell them correctly. One of the quickest ways of alienating a person is to misspell his name. Never guess at spelling. If there is any doubt, ask the person how to spell his name.

PREPARING COPY

How you prepare copy is important. Messy, hard-to-read copy doesn't stand much chance of being used unless the editor is short of copy.

The best advice is to find out how your local editor prefers to receive copy. However, since this cannot always be done, here are a few general suggestions on preparing copy that will satisfy most editors.

1. Double-space all copy. This allows the editor room to edit and also gives him a more accurate gauge for allotting space for the story.
2. Leave generous margins—at least an inch on both sides and bottom, and 3 inches at the top. The editor needs this space to write typesetting instructions and headlines.

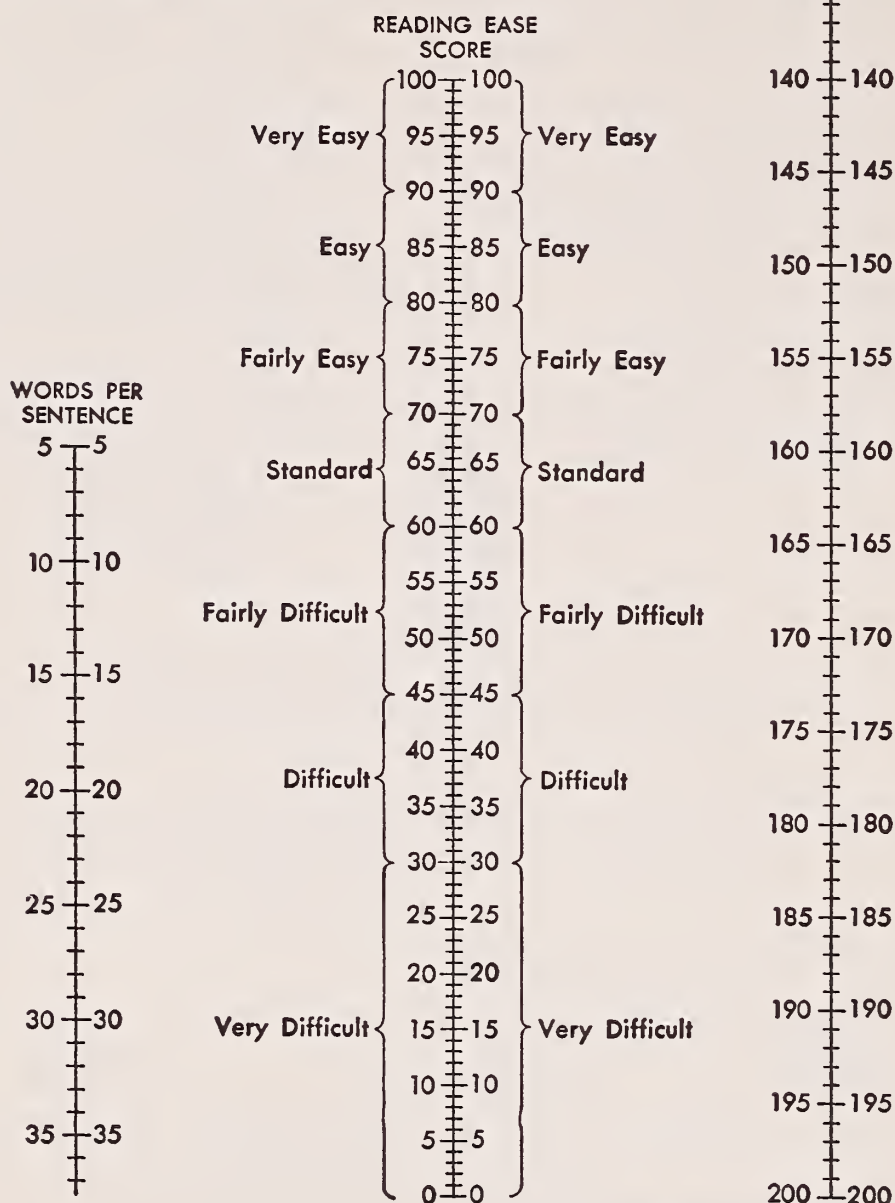
3. Type all copy.
4. Use only one side of a standard 8½- by 11-inch sheet of paper.
5. Don't use onionskin or other flimsy paper. This makes editing difficult.
6. Type your name, title, address, and telephone number in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. This makes it easy for the editor to get in touch with you and identifies you as a legitimate news source.
7. Write "more" at the bottom of the page if the story continues to the next page. Indicate end of the story by "end" or "30."

This is how the first page might look.

The diagram illustrates a page layout within a rectangular border. In the top right corner, the following text is aligned: "P. H. Weathers", "County Agent", "Courthouse Building", "Auburn, Alabama", and "AU 4-3854". In the top center, a vertical double-headed arrow is labeled "AT LEAST 3 INCH MARGIN". In the middle left, a horizontal double-headed arrow is labeled "1 INCH MARGIN". In the middle right, a horizontal double-headed arrow is labeled "1 INCH MARGIN". The central area contains horizontal lines representing text, with the label "(Double-spaced copy)" centered between the side margins. At the bottom center, a horizontal line is followed by the text "— 30 —". Below this, a vertical double-headed arrow is labeled "1 INCH MARGIN".

How Easy?

HOW TO USE THIS CHART
Take a pencil or ruler and connect your "Words per Sentence" figure (left) with your "Syllables per 100 Words" figure (right). The intersection of the pencil or ruler with the center line shows your "Reading Ease" score.



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To Find "How Easy" Your Writing Reads:

- (1) Take a sample of 100 words.
- (2) Divide the number of sentences in the sample into 100 to get the average sentence length.
- (3) Find the corresponding number on the "words per sentence" scale.
- (4) Count the number of syllables in the 100-word sample.
- (5) Find that number on the "syllables per 100 words" scale.
- (6) Follow the instructions in the box above entitled "How To Use This Chart" to get a rough estimate of reading ease.